

For All The Right Reasons

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Summary: Natalie seeks out Janette to ask her for a little favor.

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> Disclaimers: Though the story belongs to me, Natalie Lambert and Janette DuCharme do not. And, although it's not possible for me to inflict as much damage on them as TPTB did, I promise to put them back as soon as I'm done.<p> Special thanks to Cagey for your insightful comments, grammatical assistance and amazing patience.<p>

This story takes place after one of the third season travesties (Human Factor) and instead of the last (Last Knight). Apologies to those who don't like HF, I generally try to ignore it, but this one just didn't happen that way.

Â Â Â Â Â Natalie stopped her car in front of the old Victorian house and quickly climbed out. She stood in the chill of the dusk, the San Francisco sun setting on the horizon and stared at the front door, wondering if she had made the correct choice -- sure that she had, but afraid of the regret. "Regret is his stock and trade, Nat," she muttered to herself, "Not yours." Taking a deep breath she climbed the stairs, only hesitating for a moment as her finger reached for the doorbell. Her stomach churned as she pressed the button and waited for someone to answer the door. "I hope this is the right place."

Â Â Â Â Â As the front door opened she was relieved to see that her

weeks of searching had finally paid off.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "Hello," Natalie said, trying to mask her anxiety.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "Natalie." Janette gaped before regaining her composure. "What are you doing here?"

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "Looking for you." Natalie noticed Janette glancing down the scarcely lit streets before returning her gaze to her surprise visitor. "He's not with me, Janette."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ The tension seemed to leave Janette's face, and she stepped back from the door. "Please, come in doctor."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "Thank you." Natalie stepped through the doorway. She removed her jacket as she followed Janette through the narrow corridor and into a plush sitting room. Janette motioned for her to sit as she lowered herself into a velvet armchair.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "How did you find me?" Janette leaned back and studied her visitor.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Natalie noted that Janette seemed to lack some of the self-confidence that had always impressed her before. "Long story. But it was an accident, really."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Janette arched an eyebrow. "Accident?"

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Natalie nodded. "Nick has been looking for you." As Janette's expression darkened, Natalie continued, "And a few weeks ago, I was waiting for him at the loft and a phone call came in on his answering machine. You had been seen in Greenwich Village."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Janette's eyes narrowed. "So, he is, as they say, 'hot on my trail'?"

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Natalie leaned back, feeling slightly more relaxed. "I didn't say that."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Janette cocked her head, waiting for Natalie to finish. "I erased the message. He never heard it."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ For a second time, Janette was visibly surprised. She looked from Natalie to the window and back again. "Why would you do that?"

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Nat smiled sadly. "If you wanted him to know where you were, you would have told him yourself, right?"

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Janette nodded slightly. "You followed me here from New York?"

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "Yes. I've seen more of the U.S. in the past month than I ever thought I would." She smiled. "Or wanted to."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Janette seemed distracted. "A month? What about your job?"

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "I quit my job," Natalie said offhandedly.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "You quit?" Janette shifted in her seat. "You quit your job and left Toronto? To find _me_?"

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Natalie smiled. "Basically."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "What about Nichola?"

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "What about him?"

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "Well, obviously he doesn't know where you are or why. What did you tell him?"

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "I didn't tell him anything," Natalie said flatly. "I left him a letter. But there wasn't much I could say, was there?" She stood up and walked around Janette's chair to look out the window. "I just told him that is was time that we both moved on. He and LaCroix have found a peace that has, I'm sure, contributed to his lack of enthusiasm for a cure. And since he doesn't seem to want that anymore, it seemed that our business was finished."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Janette continued to look at the sofa where Natalie had been sitting. "Business?"

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "No matter what else we both ever wanted, Janette, it never really got much past 'business.'" Natalie turned to look at the back of Janette's chair. "And we've both had enough. It was only a matter of time."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "Understood." Janette's eyes followed Nat as she returned to her place on the couch. "But that still doesn't explain why you've come looking for me."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Natalie watched Janette for a moment. "I want you to bring me across."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Janette quickly looked away, her expression unreadable.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Nat continued, "There is no one else I can ask, Janette. Nick would say no. And trusting LaCroix enough to actually do it presents a bit of a problem. Besides," Natalie said as she took a deep breath. "I don't want to be tied to either one of them like that."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Janette looked back at her. "After the stories you've heard of LaCroix from Nichola I can understand your hesitation. But you must remember, Natalie, that Nichola's interpretation of those events is, at best, one-sided."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "I realize that," Natalie answered calmly. "But tying myself to LaCroix would mean tying myself to Nick, and I don't want that."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Janette's eyes narrowed. "Ah, so you are not doing this so that you and Nichola can be together?"

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "Janette, this isn't about Nick," she said firmly. "This is about what I need for me."

Janette watched her for a moment. "But I myself am 'tied' to Nichola in precisely the way you claim not to want. So through me you would face the same problem, non?"

"No." Natalie moved forward to the edge of the seat. "Janette, you may technically be a 'young' vampire, but you are still older than Nick. You don't need him to survive, because even if you don't have the strength that you used to, you still have the knowledge."

Janette's face remained impassive as Natalie continued. "I need you. You have severed your ties with Nick, at least as much as possible. And you are the only one who I can trust to actually bring me across. Even if I wanted him to, Nick wouldn't. Period. Not open for discussion or debate. And LaCroix..." Natalie's voice trailed off as she shook her head.

They sat in silence for several moments as Natalie watched Janette's impassive face, which masked her thoughts. Finally, Janette said, "You still haven't told me why you want to be a vampire, Natalie. The most obvious assumption would be Nichola, but you say no, that it is not about him. Then what is it about?"

Natalie looked at Janette as she mentally retraced her reasons before speaking again. "For five years, Janette, I have known about vampires. For five years, I have hidden vampire murders, and treated vampire illness. For five years I have watched as my old life slipped away. A life that had no room for vampires in it. But this new life isn't much of one at all." She stood up again and began pacing nervously. "I no longer live in the 'light' like I used to. But I don't live in the 'night' like a vampire, either. I live in the shadows. Somewhere in between day and night. Not belonging to either, just hanging on to both." She stopped and looked up to see Janette watching her every move.

Sitting on the end table at the far end of the couch she continued. "I can't do that anymore, Janette. I need one or the other. This 'halfway in between' doesn't work anymore."

"Is this really the only option you see, doctor?" Janette watched Natalie's face closely.

"Yes." Natalie shook her head. "I can't go back to a hundred percent mortal existence. I can't go back to not knowing about the world that moves in the dark, and lives for eternity."

Janette opened her mouth to speak, but was cut off by Natalie. "No, Janette. No. Even if I wanted one of you to erase five years worth of information from my memory, there's no guarantee that it wouldn't come back." Like Valentine's Day, she added silently. "And then what? It comes back and I have to track one of you down to erase it all over again?" She shook her head emphatically.

"I made a choice five years ago," Natalie pressed on. "It was my choice. I made it and I don't blame Nick for it. But it changed my life, and now things can never go back to the way they were."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "Do you really want this, Natalie?"

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "You mean do I want 'Eternity'?" She sighed, "I am tired of straddling the fence, Janette. I don't belong to the mortal world anymore, but I don't belong to the vampire world either. I need one or the other."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Natalie watched as Janette considered her words. Rising from her chair, Janette motioned for Natalie to follow her. Walking back down the hallway and to the left, they made their way into the kitchen. Janette opened the door to the refrigerator to reveal approximately a dozen wine bottles, and Natalie knew they were all filled with blood. Janette reached in and pulled one out. She thrust the bottle at Natalie and said harshly, "Is this what you want, doctor? Do you want to live off of this for _eternity_? I assure you Natalie, from where you sit now, eternity is a difficult concept to fully comprehend, but make no mistake: it is a _very_ long time."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Meeting Janette's gaze evenly, Natalie said, "Janette, I have spent the past month trailing you across the continent. I have had time to think this through." She put her hand on Janette's to lower the proffered bottle from her face. "I understand that you want to be certain. I know that you dread the thought of me turning out like Nick. But this is not the same situation. Not even remotely."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Janette returned the bottle to the shelf and closed the refrigerator door. "Come with me," she said and headed for the door.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^

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><p>^ ^ ^ ^ ^ The icy wind that blew in from the Pacific ripped through Natalie as she and Janette walked the length of the pier. She barely noticed the people milling around as she struggled to keep up with Janette's brisk pace. Once they reached the railing at the end of the dock, Janette stopped, pointed, and said, "Look at that, Natalie."<p>

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Natalie looked. The nearly full moon. The ocean. The stars.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "Beautiful, isn't it?" Janette whispered.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "Yes."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "But I promise you, after a few hundred years, the view loses it's magic." Janette pushed away from the railing. "It gets old, Natalie. Never doubt that."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Natalie turned to watch as Janette lit a cigarette. "I don't doubt it for a second."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Janette shook her head. "Knowing it intellectually, and understanding it because of experience are _not_ the same thing, doctor."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Natalie stepped toward the vampire. "Janette, for years I have been listening to Nick's regrets. For years I have seen him long for the sun and for food and for humanity. I have seen what I will have to sacrifice. But I have also seen what I have to gain. I will have a world that I truly belong in. I don't have that now."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Janette flicked the ashes from her cigarette onto the ground. "You say that you've made this choice knowing what you are getting into and that it is of your own free will. But you also said that this choice was forced upon you by an uninformed choice you made five years ago. Which is it, Natalie?" Natalie turned her back to Janette and faced the ocean again. "Yes, Janette, in essence, I made this choice five years ago without knowing it."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "Then that was neither informed nor deliberate."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "Maybe." Natalie looked over her shoulder at Janette. "But I can't undo what's been done, can I?"

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Janette returned to the railing and stood next to Natalie. "No. You can't."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Natalie carefully searched her eyes. "Then, please, Janette, bring me across."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Natalie watched as Janette's expression changed from conviction to resignation, and finally to guarded flippancy. "Nichola would never forgive either of us. No, Natalie. I am sorry you came all this way and gave up so much for nothing. But I will not do it." She turned quickly and began walking toward the street.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Natalie stood, dumbfounded for a moment. "Damnit!" Then turning she called out, "I thought you didn't let him control you?"

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Janette stopped. Natalie watched as she clenched her fists at her sides and slowly turned around. Very carefully, and very slowly Janette returned to Natalie. Her control was obviously hanging by a thread as she whispered, "He does not control me, doctor."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Nonplussed Natalie responded, "Then you are going to have to give me a better reason for saying no, Janette."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "I have to give you nothing."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Natalie nodded slightly. "Granted. But you need to give yourself a better reason."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Janette closed her eyes tightly, before her face relaxed and she reopened them. Her gaze was once again casual. "I do not want a fledgling at this point in my life, Natalie."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Natalie smiled softly. "That's a little better. But try again. You and I both know that just because you bring me over doesn't mean we will be joined at the hip."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "In the beginning it does." Janette watched the water slap against the boats. "In the beginning you would need supervision and instruction. Constantly."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ Natalie put her hand on Janette's shoulder. "Look at me, Janette. You and I are in the same boat. We have both given too much of ourselves to other people."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "Nichola," Janette offered.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "Yes, Nick. We both did it, Janette. And it's left us both miserable. You lost your family, and I lost my ignorance of things that I probably shouldn't know about. And now, however you want to define it, we are both alone. Isn't it better to build a new life? One that isn't dependent on the past and old mistakes?"

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ For the first time all evening, Janette's face softened. "You argue very passionately, doctor. You should have been a lawyer."

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "Is that a 'yes'?" Natalie held her breath.

^ ^ ^ ^ ^ "Yes." Janette smiled. "That is a 'yes.'"

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The End

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file.